

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

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SUBJ: MEXICAN TUNA FISHERY DEVELOPMENT

1. IN 1964, WHEN MEXICO ADHERED TO CONVENTION FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION (IATTC), CAPACITY OF MEXICAN TUNA FLEET WAS JUST SLIGHTLY OVER 1,000 TONS. AT PRESENT IT IS APPROXIMATELY 7,600 TONS. THIS GROWTH WAS AT FIRST LARGELY THROUGH PURCHASE OF SECOND-HAND SMALL US BOATS, BUT IN LAST FEW YEARS HAS BEEN ACCELERATED BY PURCHASE OF SEVERAL LARGE VESSELS, SOME NEWLY BUILT IN SPAIN, SOME SECOND-HAND US. AS MEXICO AND OTHER COUNTRIES' FISHING CAPACITY HAS INCREASED, THERE HAS BEEN DECLINE IN US PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EASTERN PACIFIC TROPICAL TUNA CATCH, WHICH USED TO BE OVER NINETY PERCENT. PART OF THIS CHANGE HAS BEEN NATURAL RESULT OF ADDITIONAL COMPETING UNITS IN FISHERY CONDUCTED UNDER TOTAL UNCLASSIFIED

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CATCH LIMIT FOR MAJOR SPECIES (YELLOWFIN TUNA). PART HAS BEEN ASCRIBABLE TO ACTIONS OF IATTC, FIRST NN ALLO0ATINS PARTS OF CATCH QUOTA TO SMALL BOATS (UNDER 400 TONS CAPACITY) OF EACH MEMBER COUNTRY AND, IN PAST THREE YEARS,

MAKING SPECIAL ALLOCATIONS TO CERTAIN LARGE MEXICAN BOATS WHICH WERE CONSIDERED TO HAVE SPECIAL PROBLEMS. UNDER YELLOWFIN CATCH QUOTA SYSTEM OF IATTC, THESE ALLOCATIONS HAVE RESULT OF DIMINISHING AMOUNT OF OVERALL QUOTA FOR WHICH LARGE US BOATS MAY COMPETE AND THUS SHORTENING

THEIR OPEN FISHING SEASON.

2. WHILE US FISHERMEN ARE NATURALLY NOT HAPPY OVER ADVENT OF ADDITIONAL LARGE TUNABOATS OF OTHER FLAGS INTO ALREADY EXTREMELY COMPETITIVE FISHERY, THEY ARE NOT IN POSITION TO COMPLAIN VERY LOUDLY ABOUT THAT PART OF THEIR PERCENTAGE DECREASE WHICH IS DUE TO COMPETITION, AS THEY ARE BUILDING MORE AND LARGER BOATS THEMSELVES, AND THEY STILL SEEM TO PREFER OPEN COMPETITION UNDER OVERALL CATCH QUOTA TO ANY FORM OF NATIONAL CATCH ALLOCATIONS THUS FAR CONSIDERED. DIMINUTION OF US LARGE-VESSEL CATCH PERCENTAGE OWING TO ALLOCATIONS TO SMALL VESSELS IS ALSO NOT SERIOUS SOURCE OF CONTROVERSY AS IT BENEFITS US SMALL VESSEL FLEET AND CAN BE RATIONALIZED AS COMPENSATION FOR EFFECTS OF IATTC CONSERVATION SYSTEM, WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE BEAR ESPECIALLY HEAVILY ON WEAK COMPETITORS. HOWEVER, ALL US TUNA FISHERMEN ARE DISSATISFIED WITH SPECIAL ALLOCATIONS OF CLOSED SEASON CATCH TO LARGE MEXICAN BOATS AND DO NOT WISH TO SEE SUCH ALLOCATIONS CONTINUED, LET ALONE EXPANDED. EVEN GREATER SOURCE OF DISSATISFACTION IS KNOWLEDGE THAT OF COUNTRIES WITH LARGE TUNABOATS IN EASTERN PACIFIC FISHERY, ONLY US IS STRICTLY IMPLEMENTING AND ENFORCING IATTC CONSERVATION MEASURES ON ITS FISHERMEN. OTHER COUNTRIES WITH VESSELS OVER 400 TONS CAPACITY IN FISHERY (PANAMA, CANADA, FRANCE, SPAIN AND TWO MEXICAN BOATS NOT ENTITLED TO SPECIAL ALLOCATIONS) LACK CAPABILITY TO ENFORCE, ASSUMING THAT THEY IN FACT HAVE INTENTION TO DO SO. ANOTHER FACTOR THAT IS MAKING US FISHERMEN RESTIVE UNDER WHAT THEY CONSIDER INEQUITABLE TREATMENT IS THAT THEY EXPECT SOON TO BE FACED WITH ONEROUS RESTRICTIONS ON PURSE SEINE OPERATIONS TO PROTECT PORPOISES, AS A RESULT OF MARINE MAMMALS ACT, AND THEY DO UNCLASSIFIED

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NOT BELIEVE OTHER COUNTRIES WILL PLACE SIMILAR RESTRICTIONS ON THEIR COMPETITORS.

3. THESE PROBLEMS WERE RECENTLY BROUGHT INTO LIMELIGHT AND MADE SUBJECT OF CONGRESSIONAL HEARING WHEN IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT TWO LARGE NEW US OWNED SEINERS HAD BEEN PLACED IN NETHERLANDS ANTILLES REGISTRY AND ANOTHER WAS SCHEDULED FOR PANAMANIAN REGISTRY. TUNA INDUSTRY AND CONSERVATIONISTS FOUND THEMSELVES ALLIED, FORMER OUT OF FEAR OF RUNAWAY OF FLEET TO-FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE, LATTER AT PROSPECT OF LARGE-SCALE EVASION OF MAMMAL CONSERVATION LAW. REACTIONS INCLUDED CRITICISM OF EXIMBANK FINANCING FOR EXPORT OF TUNABOATS, MOVES TO HOLD UP APPROVALS FOR

TRANSFERS OF FLAG, AND DEMANDS FOR RESTRICTIVE AND PUNITIVE LEGISLATION DIRECTED AGAINST FOREIGN-FLAG OPERATIONS NOT SUBJECT TO SAME CONSERVATION RULES AS US FISHERMEN.

4. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, IT HAS TRANSPIRED THAT GOM IS

SEEKING TO BUY NINE EXIMBANK FINANCED SUPER-SEINERS IN SAN DIEGO, SHOPPING FOR TUNABOATS IN POLAND AND REQUESTING INTERNATIONAL FINANCING FOR ADDITIONAL TUNABOAT CONSTRUCTION. IN PRESENT CLIMATE OF OPINION, ANY SUPPORT BY USG FOR BUILDUP OF MEXICAN LARGE-VESSEL FLEET WILL BE EXTREMELY UNPOPULAR WITH US TUNA INDUSTRY AND WITH CONSERVATIONISTS IN CONGRESS UNLESS FIRM ASSURANCE IS OBTAINED THAT GOM INTENDS TO HAVE VESSELS OPERATED ON BASIS OF EQUAL COMPETITION WITH COMPARABLE US VESSELS, AS REGARDS BOTH TUNA AND MAMMAL CONSERVATION RULES, AND IS PREPARED TO ENFORCE THOSE RULES STRICTLY AND CREDIBLY. FORMER WOULD REQUIRE THAT GOM DESIST FROM SEEKING FURTHER SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR ITS LARGE VESSELS IN IATTC AND THAT IT PROMULGATE APPROPRIATE REGULATIONS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF IATTC MEASURES AND FOR PROTECTION OF PORPOISES. LATTER WOULD REQUIRE THAT GOM SIGNIFY WILLINGNESS TO ENTER INTO COOPERATIVE ENFORCEMENT ARRANGEMENT WITH USG AND OTHER IATTC MEMBER AND COOPERATING GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING JOINT INSPECTIONS OF LANDINGS AND COOPERATIVE RECONNAISSANCE OF VESSELS' OPERATING POSITIONS.

5. IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THAT GOM IS EMBARKING
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ON PRESENT EFFORTS FOR RAPID BUILDUP OF FISHING CAPACITY WITHOUT COUNTING ON ACCESS TO US MARKET FOR CONSIDERABLE PART OF PRODUCT, AT LEAST UNTIL DOMESTIC MARKET HAS HAD SOME YEARS TO GROW. PRESENT US TUNA CONVENTIONS ACT AND MARINE MAMMALS ACT PROVIDE FOR EMBARGO AGAINST IMPORTS OF TUNA TAKEN UNDER CONDITIONS INIMICAL TO CONSERVATION. IF THIS SANCTION APPEARS INADEQUATE TO CONTROL SITUATION, IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT TUNA INDUSTRY AND CONSERVATIONISTS WILL TRY TO HAVE IT BROADENED AND STRENGTHENED.

6. IT WOULD BE HELPUFL IF EMBASSY WOULD DISCUSS THESE MATTERS WITH APPROPRIATE GOM OFFICIALS AND TAKE SOUNDINGS AS TO POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING ASSURANCES OF KIND REFERRED TO IN 4 ABOVE, SO THAT IT MIGHT BECOME LESS DIFFICULT FOR USG TO SUPPORT EXPANSION OF MEXICO'S TUNA FISHING CAPABILITY. RUSH

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